

PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION- TURF FAQ

1. What are synthetic turf systems comprised of?

- a. Synthetic turf systems are typically comprised of a drainage stone base, shock attenuation pad, turf carpet, and infill. The turf carpet typically consists of polyethylene fibers stitched into a polypropylene primary backing and polyurethane secondary backing, very similar to a shag carpet in your house. This carpet is traditionally infilled with sand and crumb rubber made of recycled car tires. A shock attenuation pad is often used between the stone drainage base and turf carpet to provide resiliency and safety for the athletes.

2. Are synthetic turf fields safe for our children?

- a. Yes. More than 50 independent studies from groups such as the US Consumer Product Safety Commission, and statewide governmental agencies have validated the safety of synthetic turf.

3. Games and practices are constantly being canceled because of rain, sometimes several hours if not days after a rain event, how would a synthetic turf field help?

- a. Synthetic turf fields can be played on immediately after a rain event. They can handle play literally 24/7 year-round with lights. Adding a synthetic turf field takes the pressure off our natural turf fields thereby improving their conditions of them.

4. I've heard that synthetic turf fields cause more injuries than natural grass fields. Is that true?

- a. This misconception came from news reports from NFL coaches and players. The NFL recently released its latest data that shows that is not true. Synthetic turf fields create a consistent playing surface that is far superior to our natural turf fields in Town in terms of safety, performance, and durability. Synthetic turf field specifications typically require rigorous testing procedures to ensure this at installation and sometimes throughout the life of the warranty, unlike a natural turf field.

5. Are there benefits to the environment in converting a natural grass field to synthetic turf?

- a. Yes. One synthetic turf field is the equivalent of three natural grass fields in terms of use. This prevents other open spaces from being converted to fields. They are also great for stormwater management since the drainage stone base can be designed to act as a storage system, along with the added benefit of groundwater recharge. They also eliminate the use of fertilizers, pesticides, and irrigation and have reduced maintenance requirements.

6. Do synthetic turf fields require maintenance?

- a. Yes, but it is minimal in comparison to natural turf. There is no weekly mowing, irrigation, fertilization and lining of the fields required. It is estimated that the maintenance requirements on a synthetic turf field is about ½ that of a natural turf field. This would help with the limited maintenance budget we have in Town.

7. How long does a synthetic turf field last?

- a. Fields are warrantied for 8 years but with proper maintenance and testing they can last longer than that. The drainage stone base infrastructure is reused when replacement is required and in some cases, the shock pad and infill are as well.

8. Can synthetic turf fields be recycled?

- a. Yes. The infill is often recycled and reused in the new field. There are manufacturing plants opening in the US for recycling the entire system. One manufacturer is already accepting fields and using the material to make shock pads. The carpet is also being recycled into plastic lumber products.

9. Don't many of the surrounding communities have synthetic turf fields?

- a. Yes. Many surrounding communities have and continue to install synthetic turf fields. Waltham, Lexington, Winchester, Medford, and Somerville to name a few. Many of these were permitted through their Conservation Commissions.

10. I've heard synthetic turf contains PFAS. Is that a problem?

- a. Based on recent testing most PFAS compounds tested for were not detectable in synthetic turf from the manufacturer. No PFAS compounds were detected at concentrations above MassDEP standards. No other PFAS compounds were detected at concentrations that would cause a contact or leaching concern to groundwater or surface water. PFAS concentrations that typically occur in the soil as a background condition were higher than PFAS concentrations in synthetic turf from the manufacturer. Because of perceived concerns, manufacturers are now moving away from using PFAS. As a Town, we can require that the synthetic turf be tested and certified as non-detect as defined in EPA Method 537 and California Proposition 65.

11. Don't many common household products contain types PFAS?

- a. Yes. PFAS are everywhere. Any extruded plastic fiber uses PFAS as a processing aid. They are often used in stain and water-resistant products like outdoor clothing, carpeting, sandwich wrappers, camping tents, non-stick cookware, and cosmetics. They are also used as firefighting foams and for medical purposes like sutures, stints, and meshes.

12. I've heard the temperatures of these fields can get hot. Are they safe to play on?

- a. Synthetic turf fields are used all over the world and in places like Texas, California, and Arizona where sun and heat are much more problematic than they are here. Our sports seasons are in the spring and fall when the temperatures are cooler. Most sports organizations (MIAA, MYSA, etc.) have recommendations to modify play when there is a possibility of a dangerously high heat index.

13. Is a synthetic turf field a heat island?

- a. No. Synthetic turf does not 'hold heat'. They return to the same temperature as natural turf with a loss of daytime heating. As compared to asphalt, brick, and masonry, synthetic turf cools much quicker with the loss of daytime heating.

14. Is crumb rubber safe?

- a. Yes. There are more than 110 technical studies conducted by academic, private, and government entities that have found little or no significant health risk.

15. Do the fields at Arlington High School and Arlington Catholic use crumb rubber?

- a. Yes.

16. Are the new fields at Arlington High School going to use crumb rubber?

- a. Yes. This was approved by the Conservation Commission in 2020.

17. What other products use crumb rubber?

- a. Crumb rubber is used for playground surfacing, running track surfacing, gym flooring, and rubberized asphalt paving.

18. How does crumb rubber impact the environment?

- a. More than 90 percent of scrap tires are being recycled instead of dumped in landfills. It is estimated that crumb rubber infill used in synthetic turf fields diverts about 30 million used tires from landfills

and conserves billions of gallons of water by reducing the need to irrigate and avoids the use of fertilizers and pesticides.

19. Are there natural alternative infills to crumb rubber?

- a. Yes. Pine, cork, coconut husks and walnut shells are being used. They typically require a little more maintenance but are also cooler temperature-wise than crumb rubber.

20. I heard there's a plan to redevelop Poets Corner into turf fields as part of a public partner partnership with the Archdioceses and Belmont Hill School. Can you provide more information about this?

- a. Yes. This plan has been in the works for some time now. It includes a full-size baseball/soccer/lacrosse field on the church property (St. Camillus). This is the land that is currently the parking lot and wooded area. It also includes a little league baseball/soccer/lacrosse field on the Town property along with a half basketball court, a new playground, walking paths, and a parking lot. Much of the wooded area would be preserved as well. This project would create access and increased uses for all ages and would be fully funded by Belmont Hill School.

21. What would happen to the church property if this partnership doesn't happen?

- a. The Archdiocese is planning to sell the church property to the highest bidder. It would be a reasonable expectation that a developer would propose a housing development for that site. The opportunity for the Town to have an expanded park and field space would be lost.

22. I heard that Poets Corner is a former landfill. Is that correct?

- a. Yes. That's why this partnership is a tremendous opportunity to clean it up and create additional park and field space for community use, not a housing development that would put more of a burden on our school system.

23. Do the youth sports organizations in Arlington support the use of synthetic turf and the redevelopment of Poets?

- a. Yes, and yes! Arlington Soccer Club, Arlington Youth Lacrosse and Arlington Youth Baseball and Softball Association all support the use of synthetic turf and the redevelopment of Poets.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Click on the [Town of Arlington Website](#) for more details.

WANT TO SUPPORT THE POET'S CORNER PROJECT?

Step 1: Attend the Town Turf Forum on May 2nd at Town Hall 7pm- 9:30pm. After hearing the presentation, voice your support.

Step 2: Click [here](#) to find your Town Meeting Members.

Step 3: Put together your talking points and email the Town Meeting Members in your home precinct. Include your street address at the end of your email. Key points to mention are that you oppose any moratorium on synthetic turf and support the redevelopment of Poets Corner into a community park in conjunction with Belmont Hill School.